

Festivals: Halloween

by Adrian Tennant

Level: Beginner to Pre-Intermediate
Age: 8-10
Time needed: 30 minutes +
Section / Subject: Young Learners > Festivals
Main skills: Listening, Speaking
Aim: To introduce and talk about the topic of Halloween.
Materials required: Copies of the worksheets for every student. For activity 2 in section coloured paper, scissors, crayons (or coloured pens), string, sticky tape.
Key vocabulary: candle, candy, cat, costumes, ghost, Halloween, lantern, pumpkin, werewolves, witch, celebrate, October.

Useful websites

http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/news_and_events/events_halloween.shtml

Lots of information about Halloween, including some delicious (!) recipes.

<http://www.halloween-clipart.com/>

Lots of clipart pictures for all your Halloween needs.

<http://www.crewsnest.vispa.com/halloween.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/halloween/>

More on this spooky holiday

Introduction

This set of activities is designed for 8 to 10 year olds. The teacher's notes start with some background information to the topic of the worksheet – Halloween. This is meant simply for reference for the teacher. The activities are divided into two sections. The first section is for 8 year olds, or for students at beginner level. The second section is designed for 9-10 year old students and is aimed at Pre-Intermediate and above.

Background information

Halloween is an old festival that dates back more than 2,000 years. In many countries November 1st is known as the day of the dead. In many countries people take flowers to the cemetery and leave the flowers on the graves and tombs. Halloween – or All Hallow's Eve – is the night before this special day. In ancient times it was believed to be the night when

the ghosts of the dead roamed (walked) the land of the living. In Italy people left bread and water for the ghosts and lit lamps, in other countries people left other types of food and drink. One other custom was to make a circle of chairs, one for each member of the family plus one extra one for a ghost. In the nineteenth century immigrants took the traditions with them to the USA. Most people know Halloween for trick and treating. This is when children dress up in costumes as witches, werewolves, ghosts etc and go knocking on people's front doors.

When the person opens the door the children shout trick or treat. If the person in the house gives them some sweets or candy then the children go to the next house, if they don't then the children play a trick. This might be something like throwing water over the person, or painting their front door! Another Halloween tradition that was introduced in the USA was making Jack o'lanterns – lanterns made from pumpkins. Children cut the middle out of a pumpkin and then carve a face in the front. They put candles in the pumpkin and then put the lantern in the window to scare the neighbours and the ghosts.

Activity 1 (8 year olds)

Introduction

1 On the board write up the word Halloween and see if your children know anything about it. Elicit any ideas and write them up on the board. Don't make any comments yet. Note: This might happen in the children's L1, allow this and supply the English words (this is a good opportunity to teach some new vocabulary).

2 Next, read out the following text (read it twice if necessary).

People celebrate Halloween on October 31st. Children dress up as witches and ghosts. In some countries they light candles or make lanterns from pumpkins. Do you celebrate Halloween where you live?

3 Now, ask students the following questions:

1. When is Halloween?
2. What do children do?
3. What do people make from pumpkins?

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Main activity

Note: For this activity it would be nice to have coloured paper, scissors, crayons (or coloured pens), string, sticky tape.

- ① Put students into small groups or pairs and ask them to choose one of the following: a witch, a werewolf, a ghost.
- ② Tell them to draw or design a mask. It should be big enough to cover their face (A4 or slightly bigger). Monitor and help where necessary.
- ③ Once they have designed the mask they can make one for each student in the group. If you have got the necessary materials they could do this in class, otherwise ask them to do it for homework.
- ④ In the next class ask the students to bring in their masks. Hand out a copy of worksheet 1 and ask them to complete the sentences which start I ...monitor and help where necessary.
- ⑤ Next, put the students in pairs (and get them to wear their masks if possible) and tell them to read their sentences to their partner. He/she should then complete the sentences that start he/she ...

Activity 2 (9 - 10 year olds)

Introduction

- ① Put the students into small groups and ask them to look at the questions on worksheet 2. Ask them to talk about the questions together. Monitor and help where necessary.
- ② Ask a few students to report back on their group discussion.

Main activity

- ① Either read out the text about Halloween and ask students the questions (see introduction for 8 year olds) or hand out the worksheet and get the students to read the short text before you ask them the questions.
- ② Next, put the students in pairs and hand out a copy of worksheet 2 to each student or pair of students and ask them to do the wordsearch.
- ③ Once they have completed the wordsearch, you could ask the students to draw pictures of some of the words (this is often a good way of checking they understand the meaning, as well as it being a fun activity).
- ④ Check that everyone has found the words (you could use the OHP for this – photocopy a copy of the wordsearch onto a OHT – Overhead Transparency – and mark the words on it).

(Note: Don't worry too much if students use their first language during group discussion. When they report back to the class encourage them to use English as much as possible).